

HARBERTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Finance Committee of Harberton Parish Council at 7:30pm 7th January 2025 at Harbertonford Village Hall Meeting Room

Present: Cllrs Camp, Davies, Morris
Apologies: Cllrs Beamish, Paine, Williams
Clerk: Ms Radford

Agenda

1. Apologies were received as above and sanctioned.

Minutes of the meeting of 2nd October 2024 that had been reviewed by the Parish Council in October were signed as an accurate record.

2. Receive and review end of quarter 3 reports

- 2.1. 2024/25 end of quarter 3 financial year budget report* Cllrs reviewed the end of quarter budget report, going through it line by line. It was noted that there was a significant overspend in the Neighbourhood Plan Salary line, but underspend in the Neighbourhood Plan earmarked reserve.
- 2.2. 2024/25 end of quarter 3 bank reconciliation* for independent review and signature of reconciliation and of bank statements Cllrs reviewed the end of quarter 3 bank reconciliation, checking that figures on the bank statement and the budget report agreed. All figures were initialed. **It was RESOLVED** to sign the reconciliation and bank statements (signed by Cllr Morris).

3. Consider the 2025/26 budget

In advance of the meeting, cllrs had received a reserves statement and a budget preparation document, showing actual spending at the end of quarter 3, and predicted expenditure at the end of the year. The budget preparation report had been annotated by the Clerk on potential increases, or where the Parish Council or the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group had made suggestions on budget line increases.

As the Parish Council was due to consider to a grant request from the Totnes Rural Area Youth Engagement Project, a summary of responses to the consultation survey had been provided. As requested by the Parish Council, the Finance Committee would prepare two budgets for consideration by the Parish Council; one that provided a grant to TRAYE, and one that did not.

When reviewing the projected end of year figures, it was noted that whilst there was underspend on some lines, there was overspend on others and it was projected that at the end of the year income and expenditure would balance. This being the case the Parish Council was not expecting to be in deficit for the year but was not likely to carry forward any underspend into the general reserve either, despite allocating a budget line to building up reserves.

The Finance Committee made some savings in the 2025/26 by cutting back on budget lines that were underspent in 2024/25, but made proposals to increase the overall budget. It was agreed to provide the following headlines on proposed increases:

- **Clerk salary/rate of pay** Whilst the National Pay Award for 2025/26 has not yet been agreed, Devon Association of Local Councils' (DALC) e-bulletin no.52 advised Parish Councils that the Government has accepted the Low Pay Commission's (LPC) recommendations on the rates of the National Minimum Wage (NMW) and the National Living Wage will increase by 6.7%. The Finance Committee has therefore proposed to budget for a 6.7% increase.
- **Neighbourhood Plan overtime** The Finance Committee proposed to budget £1000 under a new 'Neighbourhood Plan Overtime' budget line, in recognition of considerable overtime undertaken in the 2024/25 financial year, and at the request of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group's request to retain the Clerk's services to the committee. It was noted that this new budget amount is not equal to the amounts spent in 2024/25, but that the Neighbourhood Plan committee could apply for funding to pay a contractor to undertake some of the more project specific tasks that had fallen to the Clerk.
- **National Insurance Contributions** It was noted that DALC's e-bulletin no.52 advised Parish Councils to budget for increases to NI contributions due to come into effect. From April 2025 NI contributions will be 15% on all wages after £5000.
- **Budget for support to Parish parks** In recognition that the funds available via the Community Benefit Fund will soon be exhausted, the Finance Committee has proposed the creation of a new budget line to support maintenance and regeneration of the Parish Play Parks. It is proposed that

the voluntary committees of the Play Parks apply to the Parish Council for up to £1000 in the year instead of making an application to the Community Benefit Fund.

- **TRAYE** Following a request from the Parish Council, the Finance Committee drafted two 2025/26 budgets for consideration; Budget A makes a contribution to TRAYE at the level requested by the charity to ensure continuation of the youth club in the Parish, and Budget B does not.
- **Increases to earmarked reserves** Small increases were made to the following lines in the earmarked reserves to either build reserves up to necessary levels, or to enable spending within the year:
 - **Office equipment** in order to support the purchase of a new laptop
 - **Emergency planning** to support the development of an emergency directory and the work of newly emerging grass roots flooding resilience groups
 - **Website** To ensure adequate costs for hosting packages, domain renewal and email
 - **Parish Lengthsman** To support flood resilience
 - **Neighbourhood Plan** To support completion of the Neighbourhood Plan within the financial year.

Finance Committee recommendation on setting the 2025/26 precept

- Budget A, which includes a £3500 grant to TRAYE would require the precept to be set at £26,297. This would be an increase of £4933 (23.09%) on the previous year and an increase of £6.11 (15.39%) on the Band D Parish Rate.
- Budget B, which does not include any financial contribution to TRAYE would require the precept to be set at £22,797. This would be an increase of £1433 (6.71%) on the previous year and an increase of £0.01 (0.03%) on the Band D Parish Rate.

It was noted that there was an increase in the number of tax payers in the Parish, which accounts for the difference in percentage increases between the budget and the cost to the tax payer.

4. Review applications to the Community Benefit Fund and consider grant recommendations (if any)

No applications had been made to the Community Benefit Fund in this quarter.

5. Personnel Issues

5.1. Review Q3 clerk overtime and holiday tracker and consider overtime payment requests

Having run a report on the hours worked in the quarter, the Clerk had completed the quarterly overtime and holiday tracker, showing overtime of 69 hours in quarter 3. Having reviewed a breakdown of the hours and type of work they were associated with, it was noted that 45 hours of the clerk's time in quarter 2 were directly attributable to the Harberton Parish Neighbourhood Plan, 33 hours greater than the 12 hours per quarter budgeted, but less than the Neighbourhood Plan overtime incurred in quarters 1 and 2. **It was RESOLVED** to recommend to the Parish Council approve the Clerk's overtime request of 69 hours for the quarter at a cost of £1075.02, and this be paid to the Clerk in three equal instalments of £358.34 in January, February and March 2025.

5.2. Sign Clerk's letter confirming 2024/25 salary increase Cllr Morris signed a letter addressed to the Clerk confirming that on 12th November 2024 it was agreed to increase the Clerk's rate of pay from £14.95 per hour to £15.58 per hour according to new pay rates for LC1 spine point 17, and to backdate those increases to 1st April 2024.

6. Confirmation of next meeting date 7:30pm, Tuesday 1st April 2025